

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Region One Monthly Fishing Guide

May 2008

JANUARY:

Flathead Lake: Jig or troll 120'-180' deep for large lake trout. Fish points off Woods Bay, Yellow Bay and Painted Rocks, Blue Bay, Skidoo Bay.

Whitefish Lake: Still fish after dark through the ice for lake whitefish (30'-50' deep), red fly or glohook with maggots just off the bottom, lake trout during the day (1-3 lbs.), use white jig, watch ice conditions.

Lake Koocanusa: Good for kokanee in lower ten miles of lake, but check on ice thickness.

Upper Foy's Lake: Good for rainbow and kokanee early in the month.

Rogers Lake: Good for cutthroat and grayling, small dark jigs.

FEBRUARY:

Flathead Lake: Jig or troll 120'-180' for large lake trout.

McGregor Lake: White jigs for 1-4 lb. lake trout, rainbow.

Lake Mary Ronan, Bitterroot and Crystal lakes: Start to pick up for salmon, Swedish pimple and/or red glohook with maggots, fish 15'-30' deep, jig frequently.

Swan Lake: Jig for kokanee off Highway 83 pullouts. Fish 30 feet down or just off bottom in water greater than 100'. Early morning best. Watch ice conditions.

Lake Koocanusa: Good for kokanee in lower ten miles of lake, but check on ice thickness.

Thompson Lakes: Small jigs with maggots or perch eyes for perch. Look for flats at 30'.

MARCH:

Flathead Lake: Jig or troll 120'-180' deep for large lake trout, check Painted Rocks, Skidoo Bay, and near river mouth. Jig Matterhornk, Rocky Points, Wildhorse Island for smaller macks.

Bitterroot and Ashley lakes: Very good for kokanee, fish 15'-30' deep, swedish pimple with red glohook, maggots or fish 90' – 150' on bottom in Bitterroot for larger kokanee.

Smith Lake: Very good for yellow perch, fish 18" off bottom, yellow or chartreuse jig with maggots--watch the ice!

Flathead River sloughs, Stillwater lakes: Pike fishing through the ice picks up just before ice goes off. Jig large spoon or jig or still fish frozen smelt.

Flathead River: Provides good fishing for cutthroat throughout the winter, catch and release only. Fish dark nymphs or small spinners. Pressentine Access to Old Steel Bridge, Blankenship to Tea Kettle.

Lake Koocanusa: Good for kokanee in lower ten miles of lake, but check on ice thickness or fish from boats.

Kootenai River: Rainbow fishing starting to pick up in river downstream from Libby Dam. Check for spring spawning closure.

Thompson Lakes: Some nice sized kokanee in Middle and Lower Thompson, look for perch in all three Thompsons near bottom at 30'.

APRIL:

Flathead Lake: East Bay (Polson Bay) for yellow perch around April 15-May 1. Drift or cast yellow jigs with maggot or perch eye, need tribal permit. Jig off river mouth or west of narrows for small lake trout.

McGregor Lake: Lures or bait from shore after ice out for rainbows and lake trout.

Swan Lake: Good for pike at mouth of Spring Creek, smelt under a bobber.

Foy's Lake: Fish along the highway with flies or marshmallows and worms for rainbows.

Lake Koocanusa: Kokanee fishing good below Rexford, rainbow and cutthroat fishing improving.

Noxon Rapids Reservoir: Northern pike can be caught from shore in Finley Flat area. Smallmouth bass starting to take lures, most common in upper ten miles of reservoir.

Ashley Lake: Very good for kokanee just before and after ice-out.

Fish any of the smaller lakes as they ice out. Beaver Lake group and Thompson Chain of Lakes are good bets, Lion Lake.

MAY

Flathead Lake: Cast lures and jigs for smaller lake trout off shore, rocky points, jig or troll off mouth.

Echo Lake: Bass fishing good pre-spawn, fish 6'-10' of water with lures, jigs, plastic worms.

Fish any smaller lakes, especially around Thompson lakes, Beaver lakes before warmer water temperatures drive the fish deep.

Lake Koocanusa: Kokanee fishing generally better near dam and an occasional rainbow and cutthroat taken also. Rainbow may be up to ten pounds or more.

Noxon Rapids Reservoir: Largemouth and smallmouth bass fishing generally good. Smallmouth bass fishing best in upper 15 miles of reservoir and largemouth bass fishing in best lower 20 miles. District-wide bass spawning restoration, May 15 – June 30.

Rogers Lake: Good for cutthroat and grayling with flies.

Bull Lake (Troy): Kokanee trolling fairly productive along west shore.

Ashley Lake: Stillfish or troll for salmon.

Lion Lake: Good for trout.

Fish lake outlet and streams: Swan, Lower Thompson, Little Bitterroot, etc. for clear water and good trout fishing.

Streams: General stream opener third Saturday in May.

McGregor Creek: Good for small brookies.

Thompson River: Fish upper 25 miles: 0-7 miles good fishing but private land, need permission; 7-15 miles for brook trout; 15-25 miles for rainbow trout. Salmon fly hatch.

Kootenai River: Rainbows on bait, flies, check spawning closure in upper 6 miles, check regulations.

Fish creeks, beaver ponds in Swan drainage, Star Meadows for brook trout.

JUNE

Flathead Lake: Very good from shoreline for small lake trout, West Shore and Wayfarers State Parks or similar areas, use lures or jigs or still fish with worms, salmon eggs, cut bait. Troll upper 40' for lakers.

Bull Lake (Troy): Largemouth bass can be caught mostly in north end of lake.

Lake Mary Ronan: Can be good for kokanee, fly fish weed beds for trout.

Hungry Horse Reservoir: Troll for cutthroat or fish around creek mouths.

Bass fishing: Echo Lake, Thompson lakes, Noxon Rapids Reservoir (late June) spawning restriction in place.

Northern pike: Flathead Sloughs, Swan Lake, Stillwater Lakes, Upper Thompson Lake

Rainbows: Upper and Lower Thompson River, Kootenai River, Swan River (difficult access).

JULY

Most valley floor lakes slowing down, head for mountain lakes. Jewel Basin and Swan provide some lakes within easy hiking distance. Fish valley floor lakes early, late in day for pike and bass.

Flathead Lake: Lake whitefish off Woods Bay Point, Big Arm State Park, Rivermouth; lake trout deep 120'-140'. Mid Lake Bar, Woods Bay, river mouth, Wildhorse Island (Tribal permit). Perch in Big Arm Bay.

Bull Lake (Troy): Largemouth bass can be caught mostly in north end of lake.

Thompson River: Larger rainbow trout most common from mouth to West Fork. Upstream to Murr Creek good for rainbow trout up to 14" and pan-sized brook trout; may also catch an occasional brown trout.

South Fork of Flathead above Hungry Horse Reservoir: Very good for 8"-16" cutthroat on flies. Check regs!

Middle and North Fork Flathead: Very good for 8"-9" cutthroat on flies. A few bigger cutts.

Swan, Ashley lakes, Lake Mary Ronan: Good for kokanee, trolling or still fishing.

Streams: Most now in good shape.

AUGUST

Same as July.

Bull Lake (Troy): Kokanee trolling fairly productive along west shore. Largemouth bass can be caught mostly in north end of the lake.

Smith Lake: Fish early morning with yellow or chartreuse jigs with maggots or perch eyes for perch.

Main Flathead, North Fork and South Fork Flathead Rivers: Still good for cutthroat.

Main Flathead good floating/fishing from Blankenship Bridge to Old Steel Bridge.

Hopper and ant patterns or match the hatch.

Streams slow down as water warms, drops. Stay with Thompson, Kootenai, and Flathead rivers.

SEPTEMBER

Smith Lake: Stays good for perch, pike fishing gets good.

Lake Koocanusa: Kokanee fishing best in Rexford area or up into British Columbia (need B.C. license).

Noxon Rapids Reservoir: Bass and pike fishing good.

Bull Lake (Troy): Kokanee trolling fairly productive along west shore.

Upper Thompson Lake: Good for pike and bass.

Thompson River: Fishing picks up as water cools.

Stream fishing picks up.

Look for pike and bass to become more active.

OCTOBER

Noxon Rapids Reservoir: Pike and bass fishing good, look for a few brown trout.

Flathead River: Lake whitefish show up at Old Steel Bridge around October 20, fish 1/4 ounce chartreuse jigs on the bottom.

Flathead Lake: Lake trout start to move shallow, near shore for spawning.

Pike fishing good.

Small lakes get good for trout, use flies, lures, still fish bait.

NOVEMBER

Flathead Lake: Large lake trout (10-20 lbs.) and lake whitefish move near shore to spawn, fish rocky points 30'-60'.

Flathead River: Good for lake whitefish, Columbia Falls – Old Steel Bridge. Old Steel Bridge is popular.

Smith Lake: Good for perch through ice-up.

Northern pike good in all waters through ice-up. Watch ice conditions as smaller lakes start to freeze.

DECEMBER

Flathead Lake: Troll Mid Lake Bar off Painted Rocks (120'-140'), jig Painted Rocks, Skidoo Bay, Bird Island for lake trout.

Little Bitterroot: Fish at inlet and outlet just before freeze up for trout; fish just after freeze up.

Smith Lake: Great for perch just after freezing.

Little McGregor: Rainbow trout.

Hubbart Reservoir: Rainbow trout and kokanee.

Beaver, Little Beaver, etc.: Rainbow trout

Thompson Lakes: Rainbow trout, perch.

Pike: Most lakes good right after ice-up.

Check your fishing regs, play it safe (wear your life preserver), take time to smell the flowers and look at the scenery. Find your own "secret spots." Practice selective harvest; keep a few small to medium size fish for the frying pan and let a few bigger fish go for broodstock. Bull trout are generally closed to fishing and cutthroat are often restricted harvest or catch and release. Learn to identify fish. Take a kid fishing. Good luck and enjoy yourself!